

2676A SPEEDING: EXCEEDING 65 MILES PER HOUR UNDER § 346.57(4)(gm) OR AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING § 346.57(4)(gm)

Statutory Definition of the Crime

[Section 346.57(4)(gm)] [Ordinance _____, adopting § 346.57(4)(gm)]¹ of the Wisconsin Statutes, is violated by one who drives a vehicle at a speed in excess of 65 miles per hour on any freeway or expressway for which a limit of 65 miles per hour is indicated by an official traffic sign.²

Burden of Proof

Before you may find the defendant guilty of this offense, the (identify prosecuting agency)³ must prove by evidence which satisfies you to a reasonable certainty by evidence which is clear, satisfactory, and convincing that the following three elements were present.

Elements of the Offense That Must Be Proved

1. The defendant drove a vehicle⁴ on a freeway or expressway.⁵
2. The defendant drove the vehicle at a speed in excess of 65 miles per hour.⁶
3. A speed limit of 65 miles per hour was indicated by an official traffic sign.⁷

Jury's Decision

If you are satisfied to a reasonable certainty by evidence which is clear, satisfactory, and convincing that all three elements of this offense have been proved, you should find the defendant guilty [and you should also find the speed the defendant's vehicle was traveling and insert the same into the verdict.]⁸

If you are not so satisfied, you must find the defendant not guilty.

COMMENT

Wis JI-Criminal 2676A was originally published in 1988 and revised in 1995 and 2010. This revision was approved by the Committee in June 2022; it added to the comment to reflect changes made by 2021 Wisconsin Act 115 [effective date: December 8, 2021].

This instruction is drafted for violations of § 346.57(4)(gm) where the penalty of forfeiture or fine applies. For violations of § 346.57(4)(gm) where criminal penalties may apply, see Wis JI-Criminal 2676B.

Section 346.57(4)(gm), provides for the speed limit of 65 miles per hour “on any freeway or expressway.”

Section 346.57(6)(b) provides:

The limit specified under sub. (4)(gm) is not effective unless official signs giving notice of the limit have been erected by the department.

With respect to the “justification” defense to speeding, see State v. Brown, 107 Wis.2d 44, 318 N.W.2d 370 (1982). Brown is summarized in Wis JI-Criminal 2672A Law Note: Justification Defense.

Section 346.60 (3m) (a) 1. provides for doubling the forfeiture or fine for certain violations:

Except as provided in subd. 2., if an operator of a vehicle violates s. 346.57 (2), (3), (4) (d) to (h), or (5) where persons engaged in work in a highway maintenance or construction area, utility work area, or emergency or roadside response area are at risk from traffic or where sanitation workers are at risk from traffic and the operator knows or should know that sanitation workers are present, any applicable minimum and maximum forfeiture specified in sub. (2) or (3) for the violation shall be doubled.

Section 340.01(22e) provides that “Highway maintenance or construction area” means the entire section of roadway between the first advance warning sign of highway maintenance or construction work and an “END ROAD WORK” or “END CONSTRUCTION” sign or, in the case of a moving vehicle engaged in the maintenance or construction work, that section of roadway where traffic may return to its normal flow without impeding such work.

Section 340.01(73m) provides that “Utility work area” means the entire section of roadway between the first advance warning sign of work on a utility facility, as defined in s. 30.40 (19), or on a high-voltage transmission line, as defined in s. 30.40 (3r), and an “END UTILITY WORK” sign, where the signs are placed according to rules of the department, or, in the case of a moving vehicle engaged in work on such a utility facility or high-voltage transmission line, that section of roadway where traffic may return to its normal flow without impeding such work.

Section 340.01(15pu) provides that “Emergency or roadside response area” means the section of roadway within 500 feet of an authorized emergency vehicle giving a visible signal or a tow truck displaying flashing red lamps, as required by s. 347.26 (6) (b).

1. The use of brackets is intended to allow use of this instruction for cases charged either as violations of the state statutes or as violations of local ordinances in conformity with the statutes. Since ordinances may be adopted by a variety of governmental entities C county, city, town, etc. C the instruction refers only to “ordinance.” Identifying the type of ordinance as, for example, a city ordinance may be helpful to the jury.

If a statutory violation was charged, the instruction would begin: “Section 346.57(4)(gm) of the Wisconsin Statutes is violated . . .”

If an ordinance violation was charged, the instruction would begin: “Ordinance _____, adopting section 346.57(4)(gm) of the Wisconsin Statutes, is violated . . .”

2. The phrase “indicated by an official traffic sign” is added to the definition of the offense because § 346.57(6)(b) provides that the 65 miles per hour limit “is not effective” unless official signs give notice. (See text of subsec. (6)(b) preceding note 1, supra. The Committee concluded that while it could be argued that proof of the posting of signs is not a fact the prosecution is required to prove, it was more efficient to add this fact to the instruction in all cases rather than use a more complicated approach that would try to treat it as an “affirmative defense.”

3. The instruction has been revised to include a blank where the identity of the prosecuting agency can be provided: the State, the county, the municipality, etc.

4. If definition of “vehicle” is required, see Wis. Stat. § 340.01(74) which provides as follows:

“Vehicle” means every device in, upon or by which any person or property is or may be transported or drawn upon a highway, except railroad trains. A snowmobile or electric personal assistive mobility device shall not be considered a vehicle except for purposes specifically applicable by statute.

5. “Freeway” is defined in § 346.57(1)(am); “expressway” is defined in § 346.57(1)(ag).

6. A witness’ personal estimate of vehicle speed is admissible if the witness was in a position to judge the speed and the length of the observation period was not too short. The estimate must be definite and objective (e.g., “in excess of 50 miles per hour”), as opposed to indefinite and subjective (e.g., “too fast”). If there is a reasonable basis for the estimate, the weight it is to be given is up to the jury. See Milwaukee v. Berry, 44 Wis.2d 321, 171 N.W.2d 305 (1969), and cases cited therein.

For discussion of radar speed measurement, see Wis JI-Criminal 2679 and comment.

7. See note 2, supra.

8. The jury should be instructed to find the speed whenever the defendant is charged with exceeding the speed limit by 10 or more miles per hour. Such violations carry an increased penalty in terms of loss of points. See § 343.32(2)(b). Also see note 7, Wis JI-Criminal 2677 for further discussion of the required

finding on speed.